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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY,  
APRIL 16, 2003

¶1. This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for April 16, 2003. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

¶2. Tercuman/Turkiye/Evrensel/Cumhuriyet: The Turkish General Staff announced that some of the 1,166 US soldiers deployed in Turkey under ONW and "Site Preparation" left for Germany on 10 aircraft yesterday, and that the rest would leave Turkey today. Reverse shipment of the military equipment, vehicles, and materiel brought to Turkey under the "Site Preparation" project will take place from Iskenderun port between April 15-23.

¶3. Cumhuriyet: Following the fall of Kirkuk to peshmergas affiliated to PUK, Celal Talabani held a meeting with representatives of various groups and told the "Kurdistani News" paper that the PUK was taking into account Turkey's concerns. He added that the people of Iraq will determine the future of and the type of administration in Iraq. We are not going to allow our neighbors' intervention." He said that he would not agree to Syria's saying "Mosul is an Arab town," Turkey's saying "Kirkuk is a Turkomen town," nor Iran's saying "Karbala and Najaf are Iranian towns." In this light, he warned that if Turkey opened up the issue of Kirkuk, then Kurds would bring up the issue of Diyarbakir and other towns.

¶4. Evrensel: In Adana, police raiding some houses in various sections of the city detained two Cukurova University students, Yalcin Aslan and Ozer Erenler, and two other individuals, Emine Cig and Remzi Aslan. The detainees are being interrogated at the Security Directorate of Adana. The charges are not mentioned.

¶5. Evrensel: Attorney Muharrem Sahin, a member of Diyarbakir Bar Association's Prisons Inspection Committee, filed charges against the prison administration of Bitlis for putting pressure on his clients who are inmates, as well as other inmates. He cited a lack of a designated room for lawyers to meet with their clients as an example of inmates being denied fundamental rights. Attorney Sahin's filed complaint also stated that searches in female cells were done by male wardens, and that they, too, listened in on the conversations between the lawyers and their inmate clients. Sahin said he would apply to both the Justice Ministry and international organizations in order to end such practices.

¶6. Bolge/Milliyet/Hurriyet: The Turkish President, Prime Minister, former President Demirel, and political party leaders are expected to attend May 4 opening ceremonies for the completion of one of Turkey's largest potable water projects, which will bring water from Catalan Dam to Adana. Mayor Aytac Durak of Adana will host the event.

ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

¶7. Dunya: In response to newspaper allegations about a "fictitious export" business, Gaziantep-based SANKO Holding's President, Abdulkadir Konukoglu, denied the allegations and added that

his company paid between around USD 4,250,000 of VAT to the state annually, and would never consider cheating the state of a mere USD 122,000 with that type of scheme. Konukoglu said, it was later determined that the subject company had a tax penalty but that it legitimately benefited from the AKP-sponsored Tax Reconciliation Law just like everybody else. Konukoglu remarked that it was unfair to blacken a company just because it has reached a certain level of visibility.

18. Evrensel: Because no oil prospecting and drilling is being done, oil production by the Turkish Oil Company (TPAO) has dropped by 50 percent since 1980. While officials have stated simply that there was "no oil", Halliburton Company today is producing 5,500 barrels a day from a recently drilled well in Batman. Currently, TPAO is producing only 35,000 barrels a day. Its production in 1980 was 70,000 barrels a day. Oil Workers Union President for the Batman Chapter, Nimetullah Sozen, said the reason why TPAO did not invest was a "political question," and TPAO made a profit of over USD 600 million. Sozen also claimed that Turkish workers at foreign oil prospecting companies worked under poor conditions and made only about USD 200 a month because they had been forced to resign from the union.

HOLTZ